

How Does Your Garden Grow?

When I started painting after a 20-year break, I wrote a bullet-point “manifesto” on the wall. I wanted to make work that was:

- Joyous
- Visually intense, visceral, evoking wonder
- Fun to do
- Honest, genuine, bullshit-free!

After almost three years, I finally feel I’m on track.

This series of paintings that I am presenting here, *How Does Your Garden Grow?*, has been done during and against the backdrop of the Covid lock-down, extreme political tension and natural disasters that seem to grow exponentially in size and frequency.

It turns out, being apprehensive and confined to my studio for nine months has been a good thing for me artistically.

Initially fueled by the organic shapes and vivid colors of Henri Matisse’s cut-outs and Yayoi Kusama’s paintings, I set out to find a language of my own.

Often working from an initial Photoshop sketch executed with a cursor and/or a Wacom pad, I search the internet and books for images of exotic flora and fauna, both macroscopic and microscopic (leaves, coral, diatoms, viruses, etc.). I skew, warp and distort them in Photoshop until I see something I like. I then draw the resulting shapes on to acrylic backgrounds with chalkboard chalk (a distinct pleasure leftover from childhood) and work with them there in chalk until I’m ready to apply paint.

I use saturated color, flat shapes, rectilinear backgrounds and borders; embellished with dots, marks, stripes and flowers to build my composition. I often photograph the work in progress on my iPhone and load it back into Photoshop to work out problems and new ideas.

How Does Your Garden Grow? consists of several large paintings and two groupings of smaller paintings, all acrylic on unstretched canvas. They hang loosely by pushpins or grommets and suggest banners, flags, quilts or tapestries.

In the end, I want my canvases to be a retinal delight, buzzing with life.

Jane Chafin

November, 2020